

Benefits of deployment

Over the past two years, the Airman staff tried new content and design to reach the younger Airmen. The article “Answering the Call: Top 10 benefits of deployment” [Winter 2006], was one of those attempts. However, we received many e-mails from readers who did not agree with our message. We realized that, despite our best intentions, we were off target in the way we tried to communicate them.


We neglected to say that the FIRST and LAST reason to deploy is, and always will be, duty, honor and country.

May of you wrote us to point out that duty and patriotism are the primary reasons you deploy and felt we had diminished the seriousness of deployment, thus demeaning the actions of those Airmen — past, present and future — who deployed in defense of our nation and our allies.

That was certainly not our intention. Our aim was simply to inform Airmen that there are things the Air Force does to take care of its deployed forces to fulfilling that important duty. Thank you to those who provided us with good, constructive criticism. Thank you for your readership and valued service to the nation.

Correction

The photo accompanying the Air Force Special Operations Command entry on Page 11 of Airman’s “The Book 2007” almanac issue shows Air Force pararescuemen on a hoist during a mission. However, the photo does not



‘The Book 2007’ available online

Airman magazine’s annual almanac issue, “The Book 2007,” is a tool for referencing facts and figures about the Air Force. View the entire issue online and download a PDF copy at <http://www.af.mil/news/airman/0307/downloads.shtml>.

Book 2007 kudos

I’ve been collecting Airman’s almanac [“The Book”] since I joined the Air Force in 1996. Every year, I’ve been impressed with the quality. While previous copies have been outstanding, this year’s is without a doubt the best yet. Every aspect of the magazine seems to have improved. Thanks for putting so much time, effort and pride in your work.

*Maj. Todd Osgood
Pentagon*

correctly depict the command’s mission as the Air Force transferred the pararescue mission to Air Combat Command in April 2006.

Clarification

Many readers have written in, concerned about the numbers pictured in the photograph of Zachary Moore in the feature “Living with Leukemia” [Winter 2007]. So we thought we’d clarify for everyone. The numbers pictured on

his wristband are identification numbers assigned by the hospital, not his Social Security number. Thank you for your concern and for writing in.

Reader feedback

Have a story idea, want to share your story or photos, or just want to comment on a recent issue? Send us an e-mail at editor@afnews.af.mil.

book is the work of a couple of Air Force historians and is part of a series of compilations of oral histories, a fact the writer didn’t know about until after we published the story. Although Air Force historians continue trying to validate Mr. Yingling’s story today, so far the research has not proven his claim. Airman magazine did communicate in its story that the account “doesn’t appear in many, if any, books.” We appreciate readers having brought this issue to our attention and in the future all historical stories will be coordinated through the Air Force Historian and the Air Force Historical Research Agency.

Regarding the art selection, the magazine staff used photos that were representative samples of the aircraft Major Yingling flew. Due to proximity and ease for the major, who lives in the Air Force Village in San Antonio, we took the opening photo at the Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, air park. While the photos were not “true” representations of the aircraft flown by Major Yingling, we used them as supporting elements to give the average reader an idea as to what type of aircraft he flew, something we should have noted in the photo cutline.

AFNEWS certainly regrets any misrepresentation or misunderstanding this story may have caused. Our intent was to highlight individuals from Air Force history and to educate our audience on the importance and rich history of our Air Force to the national security of our nation.

See related information on next page.

was posed with an F-51H, a Mustang version that never saw combat.

*— Robert F. Dorr
Oakton, Virginia*

(Mr. Dorr is co-author of “The Korean Air War” Osceola: Motorbooks International, 1994)

AFNEWS response:

Following the distribution of the Winter 2007 issue of Airman, several readers contacted the magazine’s staff to tell us of errors in the story, “The Unknown Tale of John Yingling.” It was pointed out that retired Major Yingling’s story about the day he shot down a MiG-15 Faggot jet with his propeller-driven F-51 Mustang had never been documented as an official “kill” by Air Force historians. In recounting only Mr. Yingling’s oral description of the mission, Airman magazine unintentionally misinformed readers as to the historical validity of the event. In addition, we made an error in designating the F-51 as a P-51 and referring to cannon fire, when the aircraft had no such armament. The Air Force News Agency regrets having made these errors and for not having presented Major Yingling’s story as a personal account of the event and the controversy over why the Air Force has never officially recorded it.

When conducting the interview and subsequent research to independently verify the story, the magazine staff found that the major’s story couldn’t be found in the usual Air Force history books as the original article noted. But the staff did account for Mr. Yingling’s story in a book titled, Airman of Courage: Our Heritage. The

Airmen of the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing arm F-51 Mustang fighters with rockets before a mission from a base in South Korea during the Korean War.



U.S. Air Force photo

Recounting history is not always an easy task

The Air Force News Agency is an award-winning organization. Its staff members record hundreds of videos, write hundreds of stories and take thousands of photographs each year as they perform their mission of telling the Air Force story.

Each story provides the opportunity for journalists like me, who write for Airman, to learn something new. In the Winter 2007 issue of Airman magazine, I wrote “The Unknown Tale of John Yingling.” In this story, I learned many things, including there often is a difference between “history” and “his story.”

For my story, I interviewed retired Major Yingling, who he told me his story about shooting down a MiG-15 Faggot with his F-51D Mustang over Korea. But I wasn’t aware his story, and his claimed aerial kill, is not an official record in the annals of Air Force history.

A historian at the Air Force Historical Research Agency, located at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., told me the telling and retelling of historical stories can be, and is, complex.



Staff Sgt. Matthew Rosine has been an award-winning military journalist for seven years. He is from Duncan, Okla., and served in Uzbekistan during the war on terrorism. He is currently at the Air Force News Agency in San Antonio.

Such is the case with Mr. Yingling’s story. The Air Force has yet to officially confirm his claimed aerial kill, Dr. Daniel Haulman said. He is chief of the organizational histories branch at the research agency. The doctor has served more than 20 years as the primary historian responsible for answering and researching questions about aerial kill victory credits.

Dr. Haulman said to officially recognize an aerial kill the agency relies on two forms of documentation. It uses a victory credit report, determined by a board, or an official order awarding the credit. The order must state that the award is for shooting down an enemy aircraft.

The agency tracks these official records for each war. It also has compiled aerial kill victory studies for all the wars and maintains the Air Force’s official aerial victory credit list. In Mr. Yingling’s case, these things didn’t happen. The reason remains a mystery. But the research agency continues trying and corroborate Mr. Yingling’s story even today.

I spoke to several authors of books on the Korean War about the nature of the history business.

“Sorting out what really happened, and its importance, is the challenge of attempting to write history,” said Tracy Connors, a retired Navy captain and author. He has written many books, including a combat diary about the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing’s 37 months of combat operations in the Korean War. Retired Major Yingling served in one of the wing’s squadrons.

“It’s hard enough determining, with accuracy, ‘what happened,’ when events are current and taking place around us,” Mr. Connor said. “Doing so many years later compounds the challenge many times over, particularly when the source of what happened is a personal recollection.

“Personal accounts of actions taken in combat are highly subjective and often incomplete,” he said. “The interests of accuracy and completeness

in such cases are best served by using the recollections with collaborating documentation.”

However, the numerous personal accounts of past events can provide more insight into Air Force history. These stories are critical to Air Force heritage.

But personal accounts of historical events can raise historical concerns. After reading my story [see the letter to editor on previous page], Robert F. Dorr raised some concerns, too. An author of a book on the Korean War, Mr. Dorr has also written extensively about Air Force history for the Air Force Times newspaper. He felt I should have done more research to discover the controversy surrounding Mr. Yingling’s story. And he was right.

This story has taught me I need to more thoroughly check published sources and always talk to subject matter experts to ensure historical accuracy.

Books have so many historical perspectives that it can be difficult to know what is true. But I’ve learned that our Air Force history experts are so thorough in their documentation that I have complete trust in the accuracy of their official records.

As Airmen, we take pride in our Air Force heritage and we have a responsibility to become more knowledgeable about the rich history of the organization we represent. In fact, I’ve learned there are multiple Web sites that feature details about official aerial kills, and others have stories that recount how our heroes earned Distinguished Flying Crosses. I recommend using a search engine to find more information on these topics. Try searching for “U.S. Air Force aerial victory credits” or “U.S. Air Force Distinguished Flying Cross recipients.”

This story taught me many things. I hope those reading my story have learned something about Air Force history, too.

— Staff Sgt. Matthew Rosine